



Airman 1st Class Jonathan Besko (left) and Senior Airman Brandi Wyatt, both with the 11th Communication Squadron, Bolling AFB, D.C., try out the Air Force test utility uniform in a computer server room. The blue, gray and green tiger-stripe camouflage ensemble includes many new features intended to increase functionality while providing a distinctive look for the 21st century Airmen.

AF unveils new utility uniform wear test

BY TECH. SGT. DAVID A. JABLONSKI
Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON—Air Force officials announced plans Aug. 6 for the wear test of a new utility uniform that could replace the current battle dress uniform.

The blue, gray and green tiger-stripe camouflage ensemble is a departure from the current woodland-pattern uniform and includes many new features that are intended to increase functionality and provide a distinctive look for Airmen of the 21st century, officials said.

Three hundred uniforms will undergo wear testing from January to July at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska; Hurlburt Field, Fla.; Langley AFB, Va.; Luke AFB, Ariz.; McChord AFB, Wash.; Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Robins AFB, Ga.; Vandenberg AFB, Calif.; and Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. The test will generate feedback about fit, durability and functionality.

"Our intent is to create a uniform that will be distinctive, practical, easy to maintain, comfortable and, most important, a uniform you will be proud to wear," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper.

"We have become a more expeditionary force, with less time at home to spend caring for the uniform," Jumper said. "In the last 20 years, material technology has improved greatly. As a result, we have designed one uniform that can satisfy our various climates and utility needs, while eliminating the need for professional ironing to provide a polished appearance."

Jumper said the Air Force uniform is designed to fit well, look sharp and require much less main-

tenance than the current uniform.

"We (also) need to ensure our Airmen have a uniform that fulfills our unique air and space missions," he added.

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray said great care is being taken to ensure the best possible uniform is created to meet future needs.

"I believe that one of the great strengths of our Air Force and its Airmen is the ability to adapt to new missions, new technologies and an ever-changing world landscape," he said. "This new utility uniform is another example of seeing a need for improvement and moving forward."

A key step in bringing any new uniform item into service is feedback from Airmen in the field, Murray said.

"I believe it's a uniform fitting of the world's greatest expeditionary Air Force and one that we will be proud to wear," he said.

"It's important to remember that this is a wear test, and the decision about whether or not to adopt some, all or none of this uniform will be made after considering the results of the test and feedback about how it meets Airmen's needs," Murray said.

According to officials, the wash and wear uniform will be easier to maintain and will not require professional laundering or starching. Officials estimate that home laundering can save up to \$240 in laundry costs over the course of a year.

Unlike the current Battle Dress Uniform, the new version comes in men's and women's cuts. The separate women's uniform reflects the

growth in the number of women in the service. In the late 1980s women comprised less than 13 percent of the total force; today nearly one in five Airmen are women.

Officials said other possible advantages to the uniform include: ★ Using the same fabric identified by the Marines as the optimum material for wash and wear characteristics;

★ A camouflage pattern that corresponds to the jobs Airmen do in most situations that require a utility uniform,

★ Recalling the "tiger stripe" camouflage pattern used during the Vietnam War, but with the distinc-

tive Air Force logo embedded into a color scheme that preliminary testing indicates may provide better camouflage.

Officials are also considering maintenance-free boots and alternative T-shirts.

The uniform patterns are being cut, with production to begin in November. Data collection and analysis, and any potential adjustments, will occur from August through October 2004.

A final decision on the uniform is expected in December 2004. If approved, production could begin as soon as 2005, with a phase-in date to be determined.



The Air Force logo is interspersed throughout the new Air Force test utility uniform.

FIGHT—2nd Lt. Arcelia Miller of the Air Force's special security office puts the Air Force test utility uniform through its paces at an entry control point at Andrews AFB, Md.



ABOVE—Capt. Rachel Sullivan (right) and Tech. Sgt. Thomas Stone, both with the 89th Maintenance Group here, give the optional Henley-style T-shirt a try while putting the test utility uniform through its paces on the flightline at Andrews AFB, Md.



Airmen get sneak peek at new utility uniform

BY TECH. SGT. DAVID A. JABLONSKI

Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON—A prototype of the new Air Force utility uniform was unveiled July 9 in various duty sections at Andrews AFB, Md., and Bolling AFB, D.C.

Senior Master Sgt. Jacqueline Dean, from the Air Force uniform board, enlisted the aid of eight Airmen to demonstrate both the men's and women's version of the blue, gray and green tiger-stripe camouflage uniform for photographers.

Opinions varied, but were largely positive.

2nd Lt. Arcelia Miller, from the Air Force's special security office, tested the uniform in an entry-control-point environment at Andrews AFB.

"I like (the blouse) tucked in," she said. "It looks super."

Miller said she also liked the uniform's look and fit. "The color is different," she said. "I like it; it's comfortable and it's low-maintenance. It has a bunch of Air Force logos, and I like the rigger belt and I love the black T-shirt—it's very professional looking."

Senior Master Sgt. Vicky Jones, from Bolling AFB's 11th Security Forces Squadron, observed other security forces members in the uniform.

"I like it; the material reminds me of the old fatigues," Jones said. "It's lightweight (and) it looks like it conforms better to the body. And it's Air Force blue, ooh-rah! It's good to be back in the Air Force."

Capt. Rachel Sullivan of the 89th Maintenance Group at Andrews AFB was surprised.

"They're ... blue!" she exclaimed.

Sullivan and Tech. Sgt. Thomas Stone, also from the 89th Maintenance Group, wore the uniform while reviewing maintenance checklists for a C-9 Nightingale.

"The pants seem to fit better and the belt's nice and big," Sullivan said.

Sullivan also noted that, while many maintainers use the lower shirt pockets, the new uniform has only breast pockets on the blouse.

"I don't care for the (Navy) Seabee-style hat or the embroidered T-shirt," Sullivan added, but she said she was otherwise pleased with the women's cut.

Performance-wise, Stone felt that "the cuffs got in the way a bit" while he was going through his maintenance

routine. Unlike Sullivan, he did not like the belt.

In another flightline environment, Staff Sgt. Crystal Cardinale tried out the uniform while working on a District of Columbia Air National Guard F-16 Fighting Falcon.

"I like the T-shirt," the 113th Fighter Wing crew chief said. The T-shirt is a black, three-button Henley-style shirt with the Air Force logo on left breast and the wearer's name embroidered on the right.

Inside Bolling's 11th Communication Squadron server room, Senior Airman Brandi Wyatt recognized the new uniform's low-maintenance appeal.

"It's wash and wear, and that's my kind of uniform," Wyatt said.

The wear test period officially begins in January, when 300 uniforms will endure the rigors of Air Force life, indoor and out. Wearers and observers alike will be able to record their comments and observations on an Air Force Web site, noting the good, the bad and the ugly.

Officials say production, if approved, could begin as soon as 2005, with a phase-in date to be determined.



Staff Sgt. Daryl Alford dons the test Air Force utility uniform in the Pentagon's courtyard.